

When I was charged with seven felonies in this case several months ago, it was clear to me that the Attorney General's Office in the birthplace of the constitution was determined to poison the jury pool by using their pulpit to undermine the most fundamental right afforded everyone accused in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania and across this country – the right to be presumed innocent.

It was evident that they wanted to use me – they wanted to use me to pretend they were tough on corruption. It was easier to target a black working mom, who no longer worked for the City and had spent countless hours being committed to this City, someone who may have made a few errors as she worked diligently at the highest levels of government in the sixth largest City in the country, than it is to go after the truly powerful political players who have participated in pay-to-play schemes, bribery, kickbacks, and other gross abuses of power and privilege. But I am here.

The idea that I with many layers of accountability and new touted “ethics reforms,” somehow forced and bullied senior officials above my pay grade (ie Finance Director, etc) to make financial decisions, perpetuates the dangerous stereotypical racist narrative of the ‘angry black aggressive woman’.

That is just WRONG.

I served as the Director of Communications and Strategy, The City representative, social media manager, Chaired Two Non Profits, Wawa Welcome America and the Mayor’s Fund, served on various boards and commissions, created and led Big Events, often managed crisis related to the Mayor directly and his cabinet, as well as negative stories. I put my heart and time in serving this City- And I made a mistake.

But, this was never about truth or facts, but labels and politics. I am fine with my decision today. It was not an easy one. But I think it is clear to everyone that I am not the criminal the Attorney General portrayed me to be when he charged me, which is why the charges were all reduced to misdemeanors – the equivalent of traffic tickets.

I accepted the plea agreement and admit to my conduct that was more about convenience than about corruption. The moment I heard of the charges, I committed to paying restitution. I never hesitated. Despite my willingness to pay, it was clear, the AG’s office still wanted to charge me.

I never accepted a bribe, I never accepted a kickback, I never promised a contract or provided a contract to a campaign contributor. Despite the claim from the AG’s original press conference, I did not live a lavish life on the taxpayer’s dime. That was more than misleading, that was a lie. I used an Uber to pick up my daughter and then go back to work. I used Ubers to transport my principals to meetings out of state. I don’t have a license. I never had one because of health issues I have battled with for many years. My close friends know this.

While traveling on city related work, which I often tweeted about, I met my husband while he attended a business conference of his own, so that we wouldn’t stay apart or miss our anniversary. I did hold a dinner event originally intended for Black women who had unique experiences in Philadelphia as leaders, but it came to my attention that a staff member of the Mayor’s Fund was not invited and had issues with the “types” of women who were included in this event, I then opened the event up to other women leaders in the Philadelphia community. That staffer had not been extended an invite, perhaps if I had just extended an invite to her there would have been no issue.

I worked hard to ensure Philadelphia remained the City for Big Events, just like my superiors desired.

I was not lining my own pockets or living lavishly. I was working to accomplish the objectives of the City, and the objectives of a Mayor and his cabinet. I erred in procedures for accomplishing that, apparently even the ones that were approved. I believe the reduction of all my charges to misdemeanors illustrates that.

I have spent considerable time praying about fighting these charges. My legal team and I were ready and willing to take this case to Trial. But, I had to weigh how people who look just like me fair in a criminal justice system dripping with explicit and implicit racial disparities, double standards, and

uneven scales of justice. We see the imbalance of justice here in Philadelphia and across the country every, single day.

If Justice were blind I'd be confidently on my way to trial or more likely not here in the first place. Unfortunately, Justice is not blind, especially when it rests on the political ambitions and political legacy of men. Considering that I would walk way guaranteed to have no charges that impact any of my substantial rights, including my right to vote which is something that the AGs office wanted to originally take from me and would not serve a single day in jail, I had to make the best decision for myself, my daughter and my family.

My career did not begin in the Nutter administration and the City of Philadelphia. And it definitely hasn't ended in Philadelphia. I am proud of the work I did in Philadelphia, but my purpose is bigger & broader. I will continue to advocate for women, girls of color, marginalized people and the unjustly accused.

A huge "Thank You" to my legal team of Walter Weir and Michael Sterling for searching for the truth and providing counsel.

No growth comes without discomfort. My faith has strengthened as a Christian, where I have put Faith Over Fear. God has revealed a lot to me about myself, my flaws, people's motives, the deals they made, and their intentions. One thing I know for sure, not every battle is mine to fight. I've never been more content, determined and sure-minded.

I refer to the book of Esther in the Bible Chapter 4, verse 14: "Perhaps you have been chosen for such a time as this". In a strange way I must thank Jim Kenney, Ashley Del Bianco, Alan Butkovitz and some of the cooperating Philadelphia media for your role in God's plan.

For those women who called and encouraged me, and shared their stories with me, I stand on your shoulders. Thank you. I am with you. Me too. And, trust me, Times Up.